Weatherford Post Office legacy lasts 81 years

By MARIE CROSBY
Democrat Reporter

The 81-year-old post office building located at 117 Fort Worth Highway stands as a historic site in downtown Weatherford.

According to the book "The History of Parker County," published by the Parker County Historical Commission in 1980, the first post office in Weatherford was established Sept. 18, 1856.

At the same time a contract was awarded to the post office for the transport of mail from Dallas, via Birdville, then the county seat of Tarrant County to Weatherford and on to Fort Belknap in Young County.

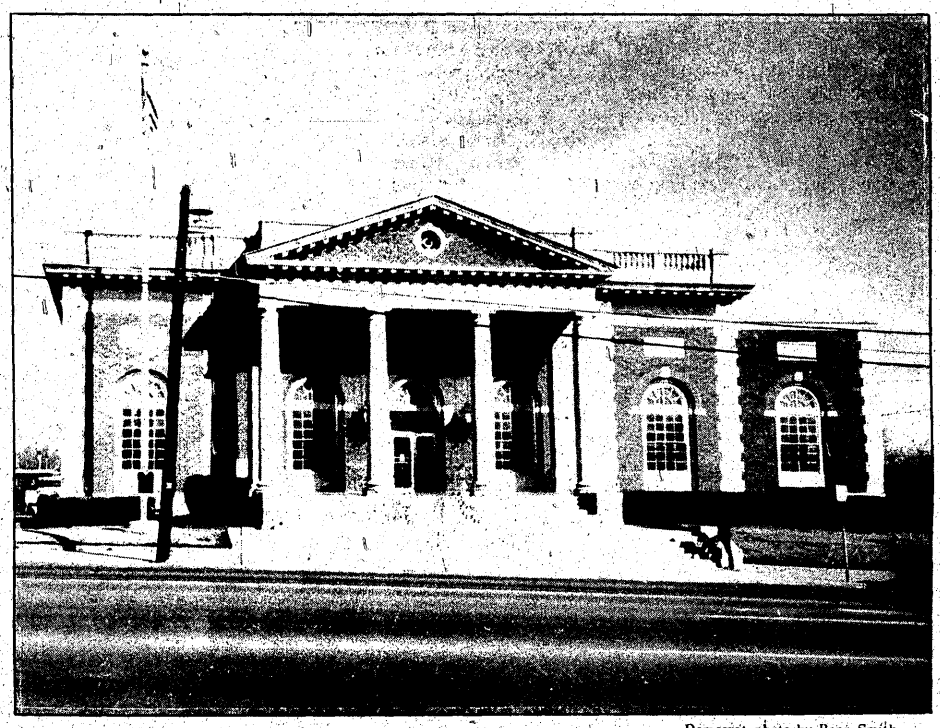
Prior to the establishment of the Weatherford Post Office, the early settlers received their mail from the Birdville Post Office in Tarrant County. Any one making the trip was requested and authorized to bring back the mail for his neighbors.

All travel in those days was of necessity done by horseback or wagon. Travel at any time or anywhere was hazardous.

The mail was carried by stagecoach from 1856 until the Texas and Pacific Rail Road came in 1880.

During President Cleveland's first term, Congress passed a law, which was signed by the president, placing many classes of government employees under civil service. This included only clerks and carriers of the post offices. It was not until about 1910 that assistant postmasters were placed under civil service and it was about 1935 when postmasters were included in civil service.

Four Weatherford letter carriers, Jim Ward, Cal Jones, Charlie Osborne and Will Witherspoon, worked together for 30 years. They began working before the present post office was built. They formed "The Post Office Quartet" and sang for entertainment programs, churches and funerals, as well as being featured on radio stations in Fort Worth and Dallas.



Democrat photo by Rene Smith

The Weatherford Post Office located at 117 Fort Worth Highway has stood in the historic site downtown for 81 years.

During a visit to the first post office, Dr. W.M. Campbell was recorded as having reported that he and his father entered the post office through the back door and were told not to do it again because it was against the rules.

The next location of the post office was at 117 or 103 York Avenue, believed to be the Old Bowden building. In 1885 the office was located at 108 North Side of the square where the Hub Clothiers is located now. Then it moved east of the square.

In 1908, the office moved to 132 York Avenue in the Moseley building. In February of 1909, the U.S. government purchased the lot on which the present office stands from Joe W. Hicks for $7500.

On Dec. 26, 1914 the U.S. government built the Fort Worth Street post office. The building cost $60,000. The contract was administered by Custodial Service of the Treasury Department.

It is not known what building company constructed the building but the cornerstone reads: Willian G. McAdoo, secretary of the Treasury, and Oscar Wenderoth, supervising architect MCMIII.

In 1899, city delivery service was authorized for Weatherford. John W. Minor, Ben C. McMconnel and Will P. Anderson were appointed the first carriers. Carriers were paid $55 per month.

Rural service was established in Parker County on July 1, 1903. Carriers were: Route 1, James H. Gilliland; Route 2, Mark Putmann; Route 3, Charley Hudson; and Route 4, William T. Winston. Asa A. Patrick and Alonzo Sims Jr. were appointed substitute carriers.

When the downtown post office in Weatherford opened in 1914, postmaster J.M. Richard was recorded as saying, "The post office is expected to fulfill the needs of our city for at least 100 years."

In October of 1965, the postal service decided that there was a necessity to englarge the Weatherford post office building. The project cost between $200,000 to $249,000. Boone and Pope of Abilene began work on the project in December of 1965 and it provided adequate space for 20 years. The postal service later realized that later the post office would have to be moved to a new facilty.

In 1987, the Parker County Historical Commission officially asked the postal service to retain the Weatherford postal building as a downtown subpostoffice. The Historical Commission was unsure of the future of the building but was assured by the postal service that the building would not be destroyed.

On Feb. 13, 1987, the Parker County Historical Commission asked that a Texas Historical Marker be placed at the Weatherford post office. The marker was dedicated on the site on April 2, 1989.

The old post office routes served more than 7,100 residental and business boxes, 15 rural routes including 7500 boxes, three contract routes and almost 1300 post office (locked) boxes in the main office. There were also two contract stations that operated in the city.

Today the Weatherford post office serves 16,275 people.

Eddie Morrow, the current Weatherford postmaster, was appointed in August of 1985. There were 31 others who were appointed to serve as postmaster throughout the history of the post office in Weatherford.

Other postmasters included: David O. Norton, Sept. 18, 1856; William Beckwith, April 16, 1856; Benjamin F. Walker, Sept. 12, 1857; James J. Beeman, Feb. 17, 1858; Edward L. Balch, Sept. 21, 1856; David T. Inglehart, March 24, 1860; John Norton, Feb. 9, 1866; John A. Goodlet, May 29, 1867; W. Frank Carter, June 16, 1868; David S. Beath, April 29, 1870; Edward Milliken, Aug. 5, 1870; George G. Milliken, Sept. 20, 1870; David W. Sullivan, Jan. 19, 1872; Napoleon B. Johnson, Sept. 14, 1877; Lotta M. Campbell, Jan. 20, 1890; Charles Van Gieson, April 18, 1892; Lewis W. Christian, May 29, 1896; W.F. Wieland, Jan. 22, 1901; Charles C. Littleton, Feb. 9, 1904; Robert B. Milliken and Charles B. Milliken, April 18, 1907; James M. Richards, July 1, 1913; Walter W. Hudson, March 15, 1922; Robert K. Phillips, Aug. 1, 1934; Ray W. Oliver, Feb. 29,1948; Willard Thomas, 1954-1978; and Dwight Oldham, 1978-1984.

Some observations concerning the postmasters:

David O. Norton was the grandfather of fellow townsman, Roy Norton. John Norton was uncle of Roy Norton. Lotta M. Campbell was the only woman postmaster. All postmasters up to Ray W. Oliver were "political appointments." Oliver was the only "service postmaster" appointed from those in federal civil service. Robert B. Milliken was the father of townsmen, Charles B. and W. Millikien. Napoleon B. Johnson was the father of Walter A. Johnson of East Lee.

Frequent changes in postmasters in the early days was due to the small amount of pay received. Their compensation was the value of a postage stamp cancelled.

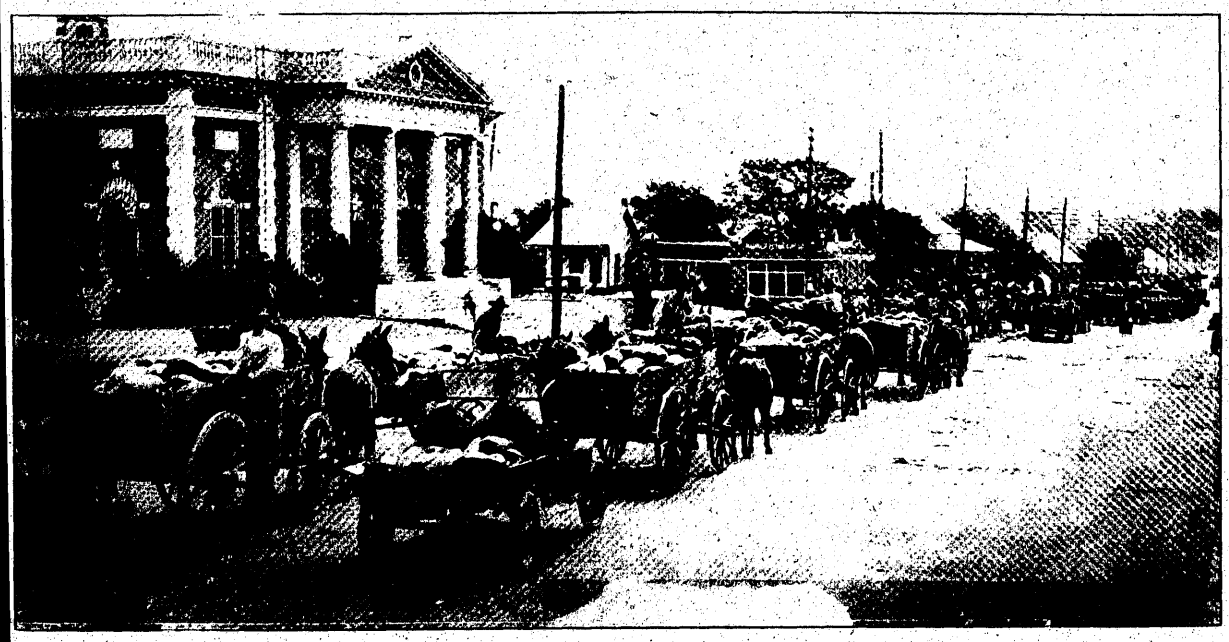
The date of the establishment of the Star Route Service is not known. Star route service is contract service for delivery of U.S. mail from the local office to inland post offices. This service was in existence many years before Rural Free Delivery. Three Star routes still operate out of the Weatherford post office.

Arthur W. Drechsel and his wife, Gertie, were Star route carriers from Wetherford to Springtown to Dennis in the 1920's.

George M. Jones and Willard Thomas contributed information on the history of the Weatherford post office for inclusion in the book, "The History of Parker County." Jones, a native of Parker County, went to work for the post office on July 1, 1905 and retired on July 1, 1944. He served as assistant postmaster for 25 years, the longest time that anyone has served in that capacity before or since.

Jones and Thomas felt indebted to Fred R. Cotten, Dr. W.M. Campbell, W.D. Taylor and others who supplied them with information about the post office for their historical report which is recorded in the book, "The History of Parker County."

Arthur W. and Gertie Dreschel



Watermelons roll past the Weatherford Post office located in the 100 block of Fort Worth Highway in 1924.

"Post Office Quartet" consisted of four Weatherford letter carriers Jim Ward, Cal Jones, Charlie Osborne and Will Witherspoon who went to work at the post office before it was built. The quartet performed at entertainment events, funerals as well as Fort Worth radio stations.